DOCTOR STRANGE #1 ANNUAL

IMMONEN
ROMERO
BELLAIRE

MARVEL

PLUS, A SPECIAL PRELUDE TO:

DOCTOR STRANGE AND THE SORCERERS SUPREME

STEPHEN STRANGE was a preeminent surgeon until a car accident damaged the nerves in his hands. His ego drove him to scour the globe for a miracle cure, but instead he found a mysterious wizard called the ANCIENT ONE who taught him magic and that there are things in this world bigger than himself. These lessons led Stephen to become the Sorcerer Supreme, Earth's first defense against all manner of magical threats. His patients call him...

DOCTOR STRANGE

The EMPIRIKUL, an interdimensional army, has destroyed almost all magic on Earth. Stephen and Earth's mages managed to defeat them, but the state of magic will never be the same again. Now left to rebuild from the remains of the Sanctum Sanctorum, Doctor Strange finds himself at a crossroads.

And while Stephen, Wong, and Zelma were able to survive the onslaught, what became of those who weren't with them?

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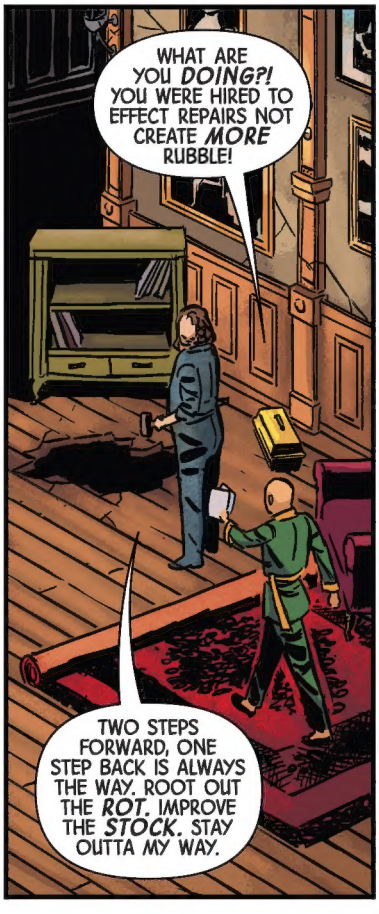
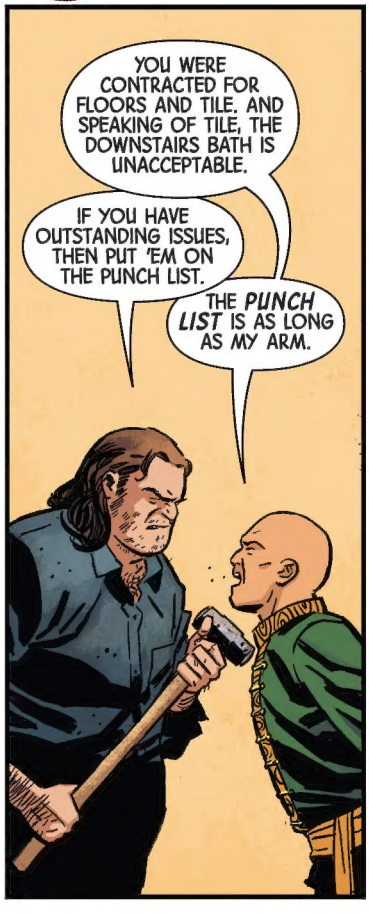
"TO GET HER. FOREVER."
TWO SHALL NO LONGER BE AS ONE. THOUGH A HUNDRED UNIVERSES SHALL SEPARATE THEM, IT SHALL NOT BE SUFFICIENT. THOUGH A THOUSAND REALMS OF DARKNESS OBSCURE THEM, IT SHALL NOT SUFFICE.
TWO SHALL NO LONGER BE AS ONE. A WISH, IT SHALL NOT BE BORNE. A PROMISE, IT WILL NOT BE KEPT. A FUTURE, IT CAN NOT BE PERMITTED.
I WILL HAVE IT ANATHEMA. ONCE A THING DEVOTED, NOW A THING ACCURSED. AS THE FIRE TO THE FOREST.
AS A CANCER TO THE BODY.
AS A LIGHT TO THE DARKNESS.
...TWO SHALL NO LONGER BE AS ONE. AS I SEAL THIS CONTRACT, THEN SHALL TWO BE STRANGERS...
AND BE DONE.

177A BLEECKER STREET, GREENWICH VILLAGE, NEW YORK. OR WHAT'S LEFT OF IT.
BANG BANG BANG CRASH

→SNARRLL←
STOP! STOP IT!!!

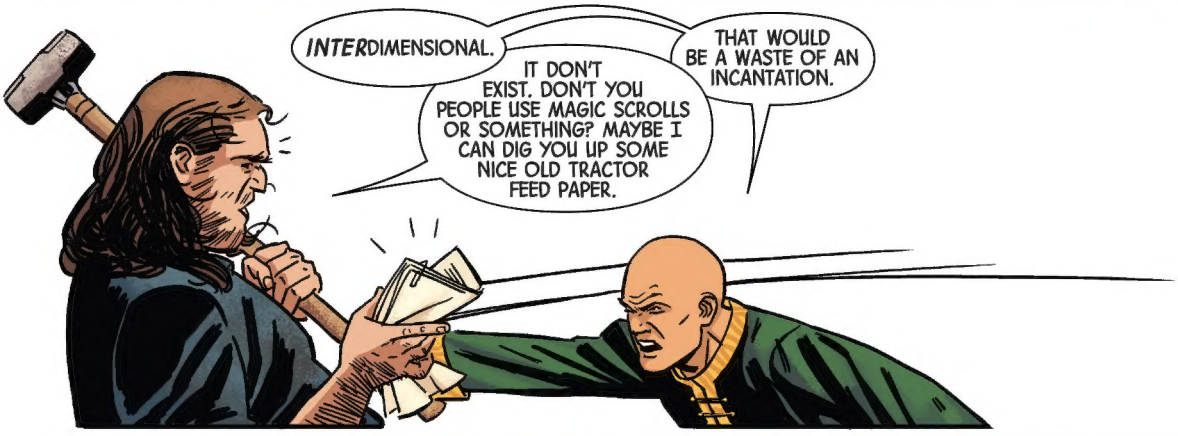

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! YOU WERE HIRED TO EFFECT REPAIRS NOT CREATE MORE RUBBLE!
TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK IS ALWAYS THE WAY. ROOT OUT THE ROT. IMPROVE THE STOCK. STAY OUTTA MY WAY.


YOU WERE CONTRACTED FOR FLOORS AND TILE. AND SPEAKING OF TILE, THE DOWNSTAIRS BATH IS UNACCEPTABLE.
IF YOU HAVE OUTSTANDING ISSUES, THEN PUT 'EM ON THE PUNCH LIST.
THE PUNCH LIST IS AS LONG AS MY ARM.

FUNNY, THAT. MINE'S ONLY GOT THE ONE THING ON IT AT THE MOMENT. STRANGE, INNIT?
NOT STRANGE AT ALL, YOU CORDLESS-TOOLED GORILLA. BUT IF YOU THINK I'M GOING TO TOLERATE IDLE--
STRANGE. BEHIND YOU.
TWITCH

STEPHEN?
JUST PULLING YOUR LEG. CAN I GET BACK TO WORK, YOUR WORSHIP?

NO. I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THIS INTERDIMENSIONAL WEATHER STRIPPING.
MULTI-DIMENSIONAL.


INTERDIMENSIONAL.
IT DON'T EXIST. DON'T YOU PEOPLE USE MAGIC SCROLLS OR SOMETHING? MAYBE I CAN DIG YOU UP SOME NICE OLD TRACTOR FEED PAPER.
THAT WOULD BE A WASTE OF AN INCANTATION.

YOU SURE YOU WERE LOOKING AT THE DOT COM SITE AND NOT THE DOT KAY-ZEE OR THE DOT ARE-YOU-AN-IDIOT-BECAUSE-WE'LL-TAKE-ALL-YOUR-MONEY-FOR-A-PRODUCT-WHAT-DON'T-EXIST.
DOCTOR STRANGE HAS SPECIFIC NEEDS AND SPECIFICALLY SIGNED OFF ON INTERDIMENSIONAL GASKETS.
WHAT DON'T EXIST! NO ONE'S EVEN THOUGHT OF IT! YOU THINK I'D BE WORKING HERE IF I'D INVENTED IT?

FIVE YEARS LATER...
YOU TELL YOUR "CLIENT" THAT I DON'T CARE WHAT KIND OF GOD HE IS. AND THE AEROSOL INTER-UNIVERSE LEAK STOP WON'T BE AVAILABLE UNTIL THE SPRING. BUT IF HE STILL WANTS A THOUSAND KILOMETERS OF GASKET, I CAN PUT HIM ON THE WAITING LIST!

SEE? RIGHT THERE. "MULTI" AS IN TOP, BOTTOM AND SIDES. AND IT WON'T MAKE COFFEE OR WALK YOUR DOG, NEITHER.
WONG!

WONG, PLEASE, *PLEASE,* CAN YOU GO A LITTLE EASIER ON HIM? IT'S DIFFICULT TO GET THESE GUYS OUT AND EVEN HARDER TO RETAIN THEM!
I AM NOT THE ONE WHO'S DIFFICULT TO WORK WITH, STEPHEN.
BANG BANG
PLEASE. LET'S JUST OBEY THE LAWS OF PRODUCTION, OKAY? IT WILL BE WHAT WE EXPECT, I PROMISE.
I VERY MUCH DOUBT THAT.
THEN HOW ABOUT WHAT WE CAN *TOLERATE?* ONLY APPARENTLY, YOU CAN'T TOLERATE A MINUTE DEVIATION IN GROUT LINES.
BING BONG
IF YOU CONSIDER AN ERROR TO BE AN ACCEPTABLE DEVIATION... THE DOORBELL, STEPHEN.
BING BONG
ZELMA CAN GET IT.
THE WORLD WAS CREATED FROM ACCEPTABLE DEVIATION. GET USED TO IT! *ZELMA!*
ZELMA!!
ANSWERING DOORS IS NOT HER JOB, STEPHEN. AND BESIDES, SHE'S ON VACATION.
BANG CRASH BANG
BING BONG
WHO ALLOWED *THAT?* SHE'S AN UNPAID LIBRARY INTERN! AND WHO DECIDED WE NEEDED A DOORBELL?! WE'VE *NEVER* HAD A DOORBELL!
YOU DID, ON BOTH COUNTS. YOU FOOTED THE BILL. YOU EVEN SAID SHE EARNED IT.
FINE. *FINE.* I'LL GET IT.

WHAT IS--
--IT.
HELLO, STEPHEN.
I--
STEPHEN, IT'S ME. CLEA.
I KNOW.
WE NEED TO TALK. CAN I COME IN?
YES, OF COURSE. PLEASE, WELCOME.

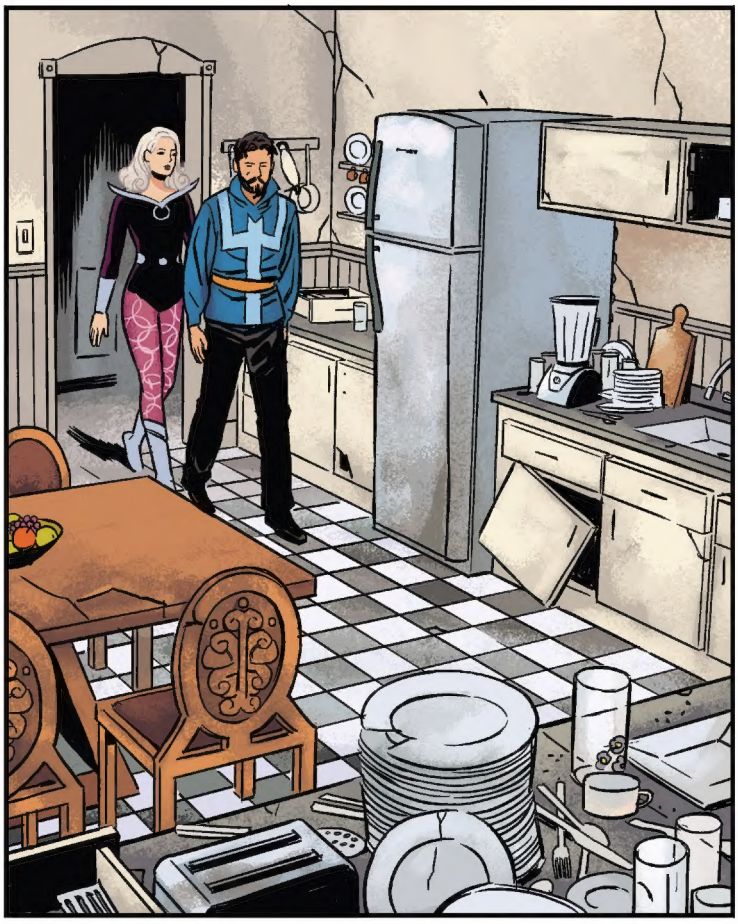
CAN I TAKE YOUR--
NEVER MIND.
A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
AND YOU.
BING BONG

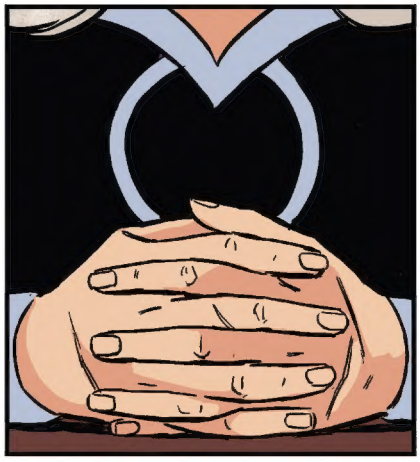
BY THE SEVEN RINGS OF RAGGADORR, I SWEAR I'LL MURDER--
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO DO THAT FOR YOU?

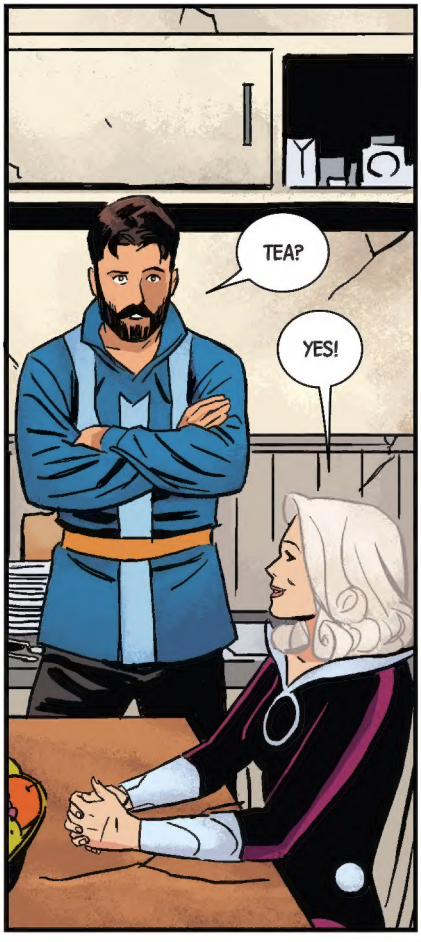
SHE'S ON VACATION!
IT'S NOT--
OUTTA THE WAY. I'LL GET IT.
WHO'S THAT, THEN?
TILE AND FLOORING.

DELIVERY! THAT'LL BE A HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE. NOT INCLUDING TIP, OF COURSE.
TO BE SURE. WONG!

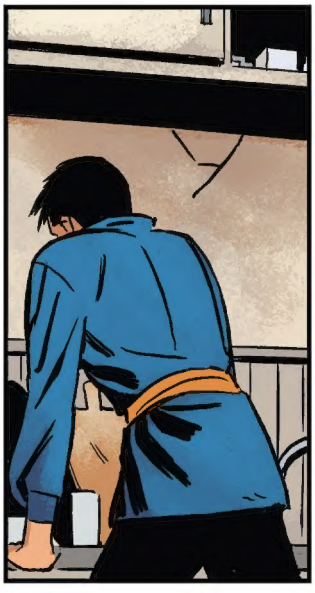
COME ON. I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF THIS. LET'S GO TO THE KITCHEN.
WHAT'S LEFT OF IT.

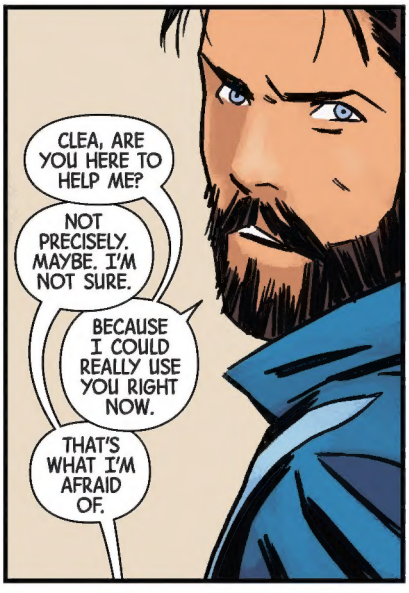


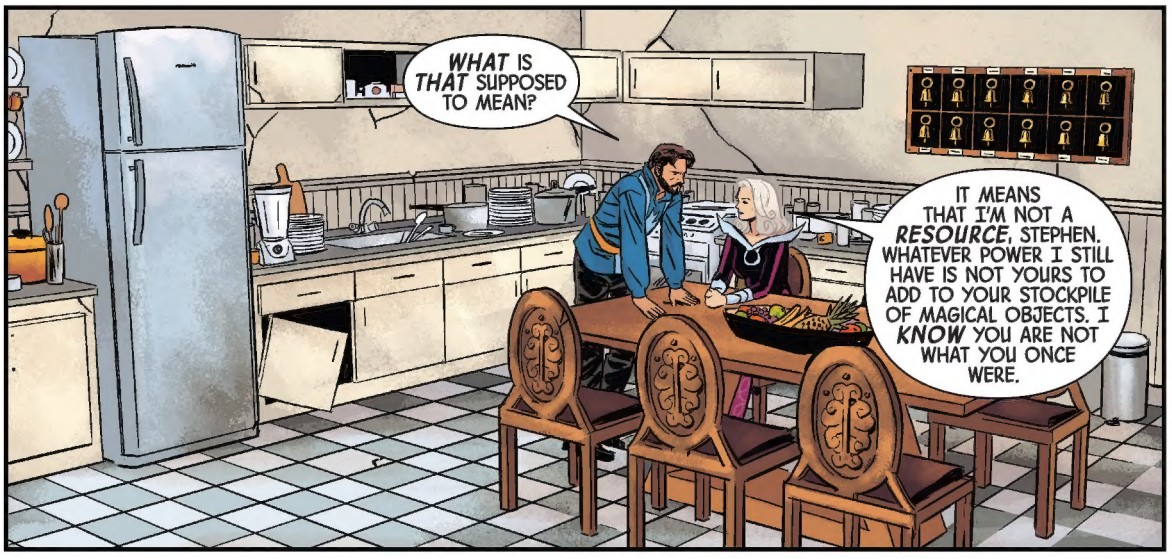



TEA?
YES!

HOW DOES ANYONE FIND A DAMN THING IN THIS MESS? I CAN'T BELIEVE--
STEPHEN.
STEPHEN.




CLEA, ARE YOU HERE TO HELP ME?
NOT PRECISELY. MAYBE. I'M NOT SURE.
BECAUSE I COULD REALLY USE YOU RIGHT NOW.
THAT'S WHAT I'M AFRAID OF.


WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
IT MEANS THAT I'M NOT A RESOURCE, STEPHEN. WHATEVER POWER I STILL HAVE IS NOT YOURS TO ADD TO YOUR STOCKPILE OF MAGICAL OBJECTS. I KNOW YOU ARE NOT WHAT YOU ONCE WERE.

I AM MORE THAN MY POWER. THAT IS WHY I WAS WILLING TO GIVE IT ALL UP IN THE FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL.
WHERE WERE YOU?

"WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE REST OF US WERE FIGHTING FOR OUR VERY EXISTENCE?

"WHEN MAGIC WAS FLOWING OUT OF THIS WORLD LIKE A RIPPED ARTERY DRAINING INTO A WARM SALT OCEAN.

"WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE EMPIRIKUL CAME?"

THE SINNER WILL BE PURIFIED. THE SORCERESS WILL BE CONSUMED. YOU WILL BE RE-FORMED AND YOU SHALL BE AS DUST.
NOT. TODAY.

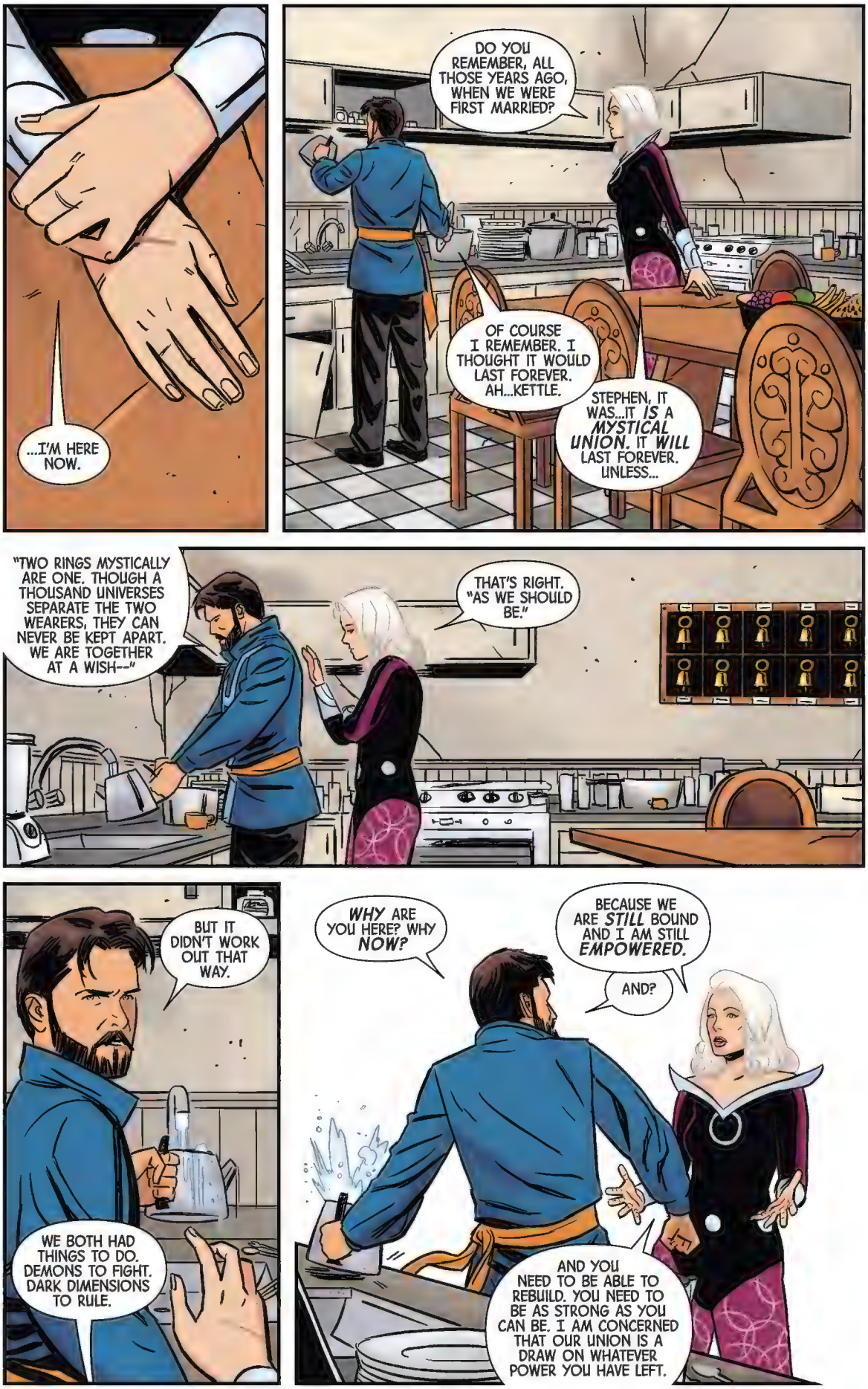
BEGIN THE INSTRUCTION. TEAR HER TO PIECES.
DUST AND STARLIGHT.

"WHERE WAS I?

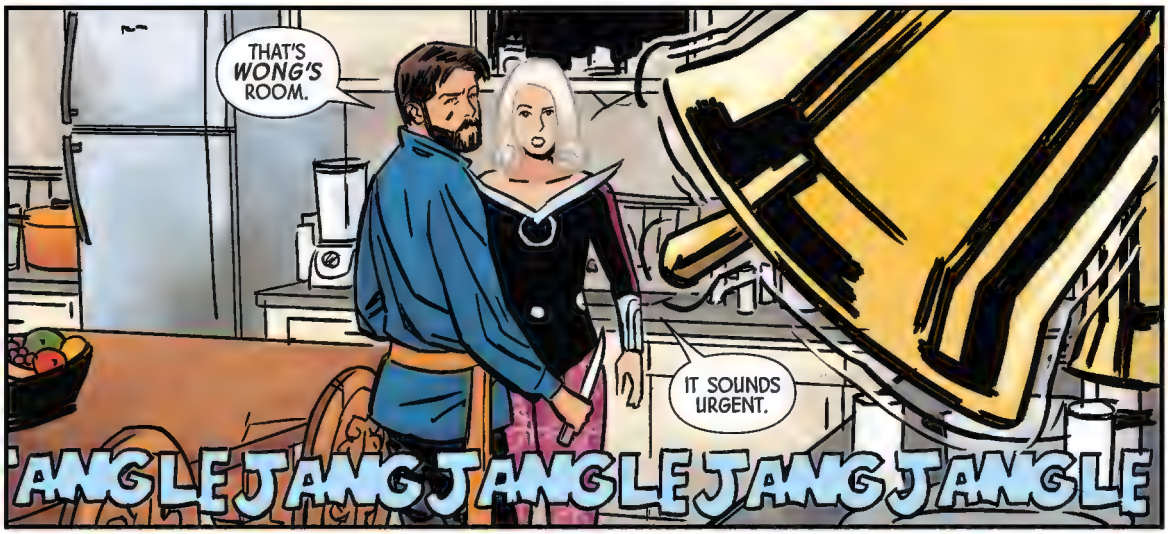
"NOWHERE.

"EVERYWHERE.

"WELL..."

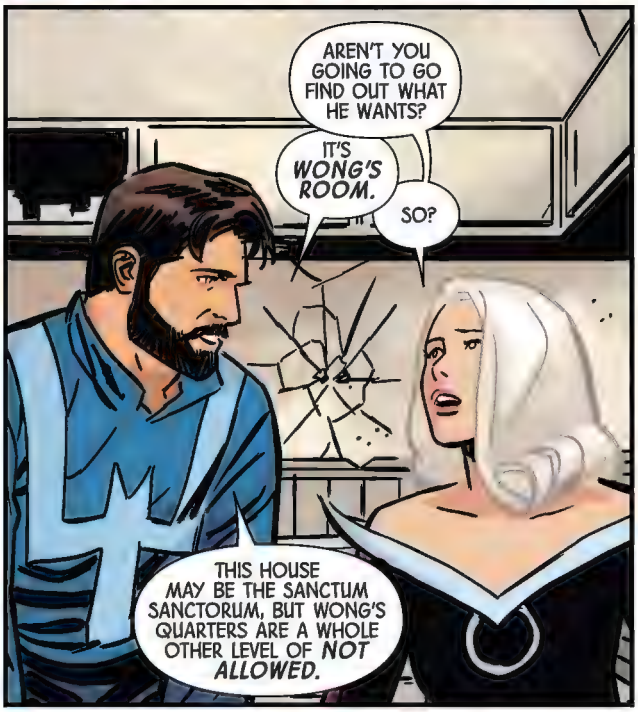

...I'M HERE NOW.
DO YOU REMEMBER, ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, WHEN WE WERE FIRST MARRIED?
OF COURSE I REMEMBER. I THOUGHT IT WOULD LAST FOREVER. AH...KETTLE.
STEPHEN, IT WAS...IT IS A MYSTICAL UNION. IT WILL LAST FOREVER. UNLESS...
"TWO RINGS MYSTICALLY ARE ONE. THOUGH A THOUSAND UNIVERSES SEPARATE THE TWO WEARERS, THEY CAN NEVER BE KEPT APART. WE ARE TOGETHER AT A WISH--"
THAT'S RIGHT. "AS WE SHOULD BE."
BUT IT DIDN'T WORK OUT THAT WAY.
WE BOTH HAD THINGS TO DO. DEMONS TO FIGHT. DARK DIMENSIONS TO RULE.
WHY ARE YOU HERE? WHY NOW?
BECAUSE WE ARE STILL BOUND AND I AM STILL EMPOWERED.
AND?
AND YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO REBUILD. YOU NEED TO BE AS STRONG AS YOU CAN BE. I AM CONCERNED THAT OUR UNION IS A DRAW ON WHATEVER POWER YOU HAVE LEFT.

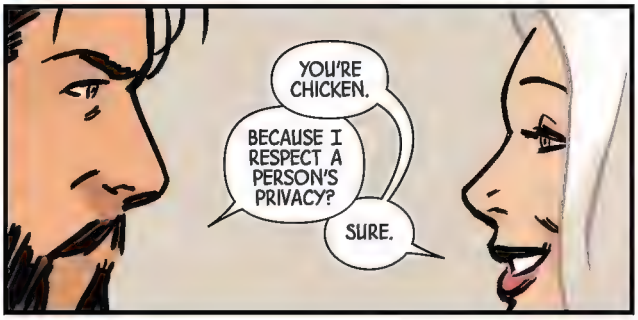
WONG, I NEED SOME HELP!


THAT'S WONG'S ROOM.
IT SOUNDS URGENT.
ANGLE JANG JANGLE JANG JANGLE

LE JANG JANGLE JAN
SNAP

WIZZZZZZZZZ
LOOK OUT!


AREN'T YOU GOING TO GO FIND OUT WHAT HE WANTS?
IT'S WONG'S ROOM.
SO?
THIS HOUSE MAY BE THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM, BUT WONG'S QUARTERS ARE A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL OF NOT ALLOWED.

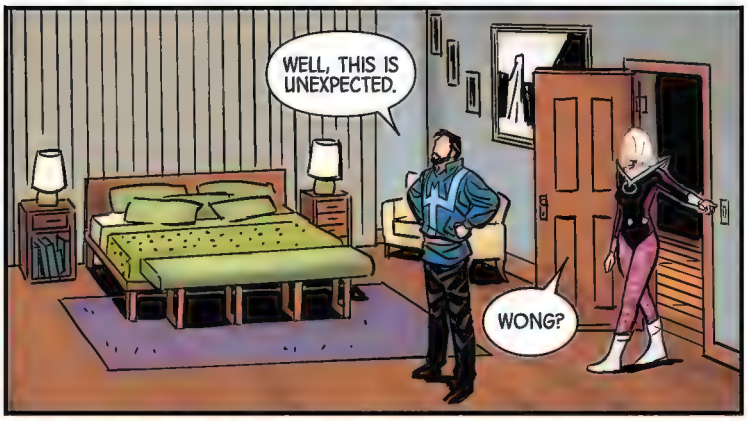

YOU'RE CHICKEN.
BECAUSE I RESPECT A PERSON'S PRIVACY?
SURE.

GO AHEAD, IT WON'T BITE. OR MAYBE IT WILL. BUT HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF YOU DON'T KNOCK? YOU SHOULD GO AHEAD AND DO THAT. THE RESULTS COULD BE INTOXICATING. DO IT. BEFORE I FALL ASLEEP. I MEAN IT.
DON'T RUSH ME.

RAP RAP RAP
WONG?

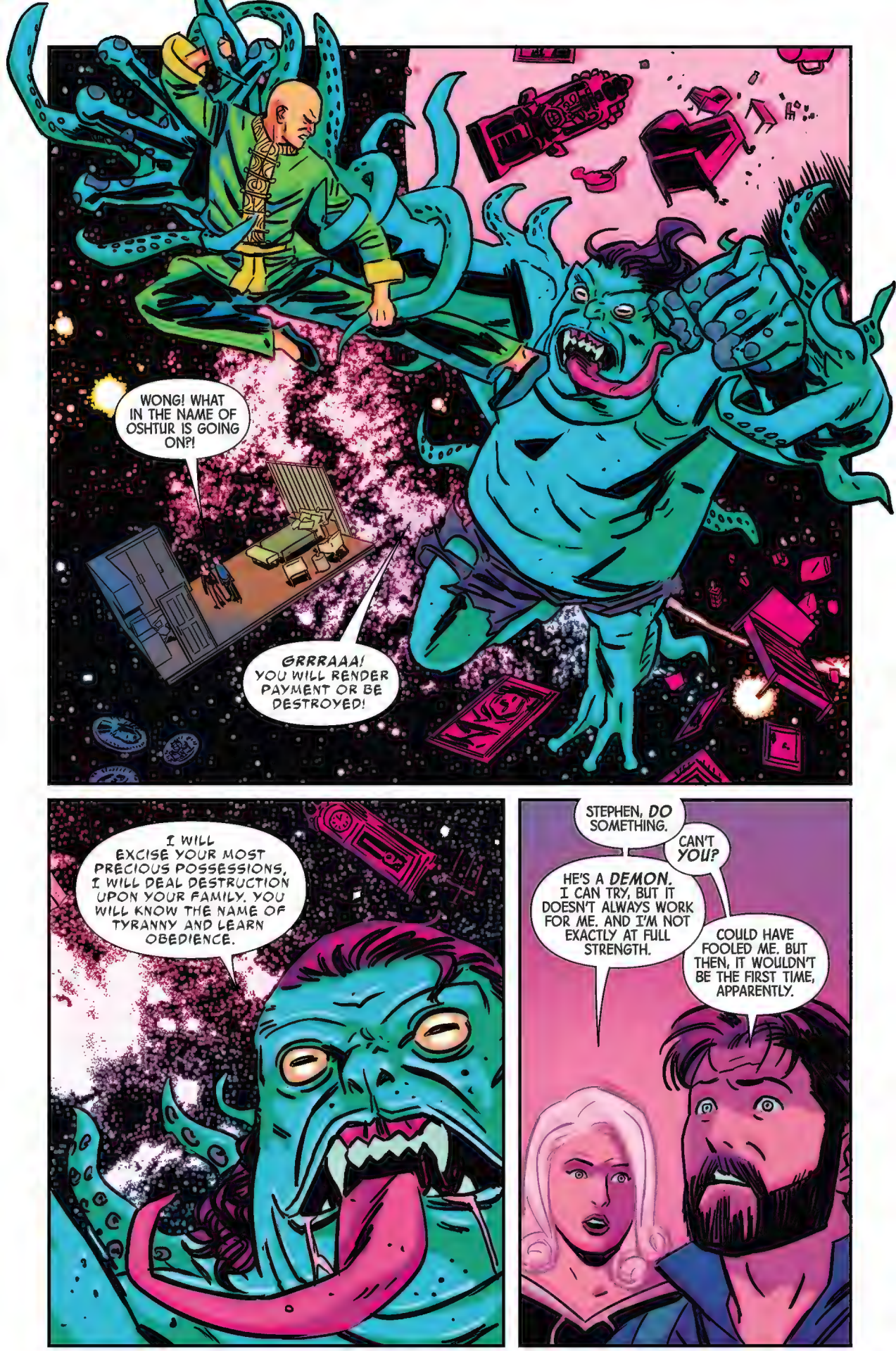
GIVE UP YOUR SECRETS OR DIE IN THE FIRES OF XYCORAX.
I GUESS THAT MEANS "COME IN."
I AGREE.

CREEEAK


WELL, THIS IS UNEXPECTED.
WONG?

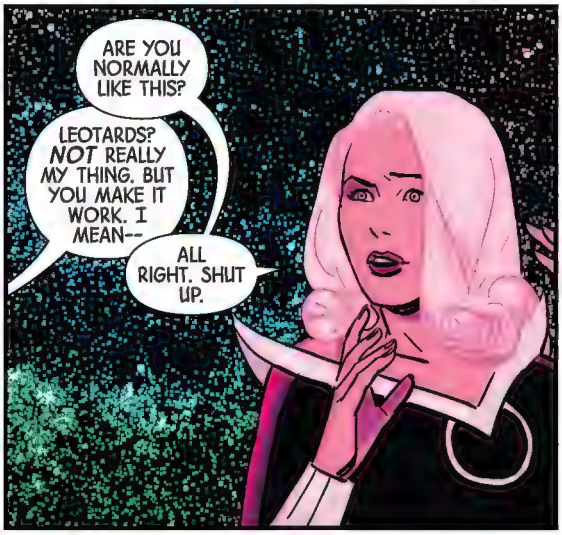
SLAM

NOW, THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.

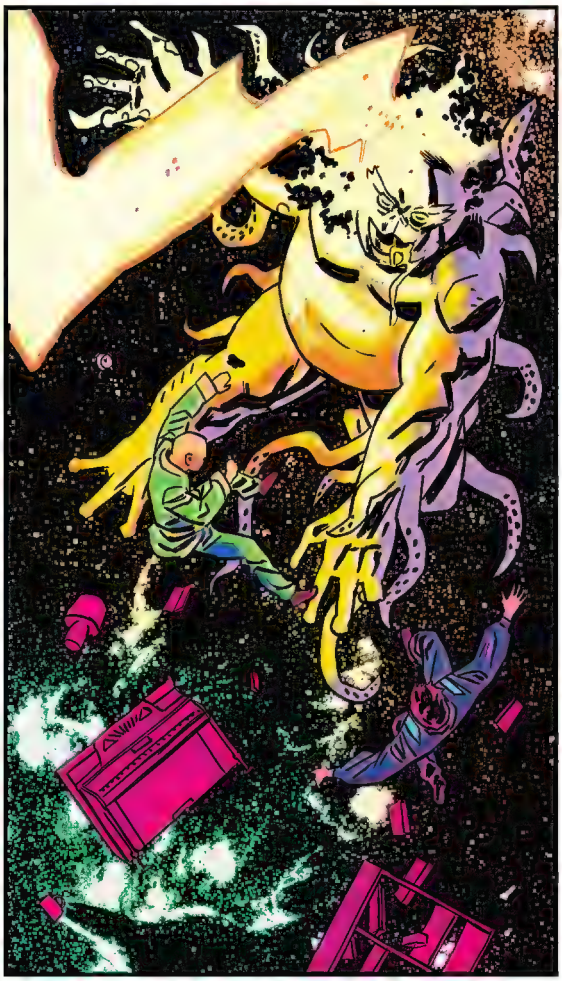

WONG! WHAT IN THE NAME OF OSHTUR IS GOING ON?!
GRRRAAA! YOU WILL RENDER PAYMENT OR BE DESTROYED!
I WILL EXCISE YOUR MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSIONS, I WILL DEAL DESTRUCTION UPON YOUR FAMILY. YOU WILL KNOW THE NAME OF TYRANNY AND LEARN OBEDIENCE.
STEPHEN, DO SOMETHING.
CAN'T YOU?
HE'S A DEMON. I CAN TRY, BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK FOR ME. AND I'M NOT EXACTLY AT FULL STRENGTH.
COULD HAVE FOOLED ME. BUT THEN, IT WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST TIME, APPARENTLY.

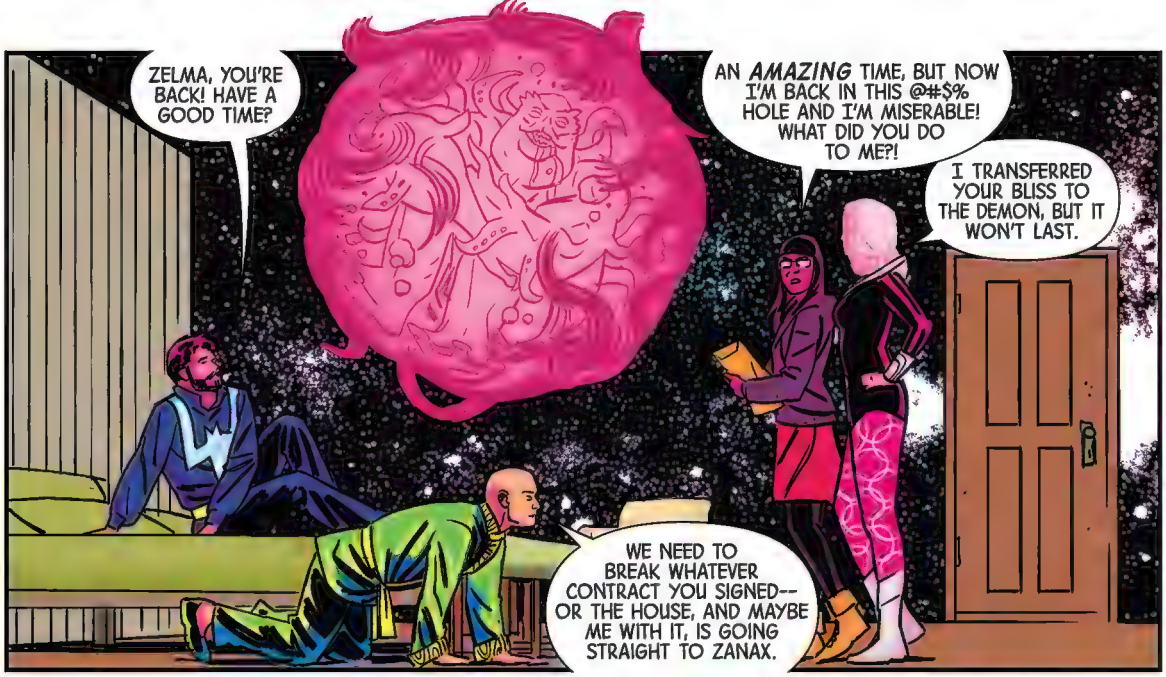
THAT'S NOT FAIR.
WELL, GIVE IT A GO, AND IN THE MEANTIME--
YOU'RE NO BETTER A FIGHTER THAN A GROUTER!
XYCORAX IS OUR CONTRACTOR?
MIIIIINNNNNE. FORREEVVVVER...
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?
I CAUGHT HIM STEALING AND HE WENT BERSERK. WHAT KIND OF AGREEMENT DID YOU SIGN WITH THIS FELLOW?
IT LOOKED LIKE A STANDARD CONTRACT!
DID YOU TELL HIM I CAME WITH THE HOUSE? WERE THERE ANY BIG WORDS YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND?
COME ON, WONG. WHO READS THE FINE PRINT?
I DO! AND I DO IT QUIETLY IN MY HEAD JUST IN CASE!
WATCH IT!
CLEA!
I'M TRYING.
WOW. THIS IS REALLY SOMETHING. I MEAN, SERIOUSLY... SOMETHING.

WHO ARE YOU?
ZELMA. LIBRARIAN. BACK FROM TWO AMAZING WEEKS IN JAMAICA.
I MEAN, IT WAS GLORIOUS. I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER BEEN SO RELAXED. I REALLY LIKE YOUR LEOTARD.

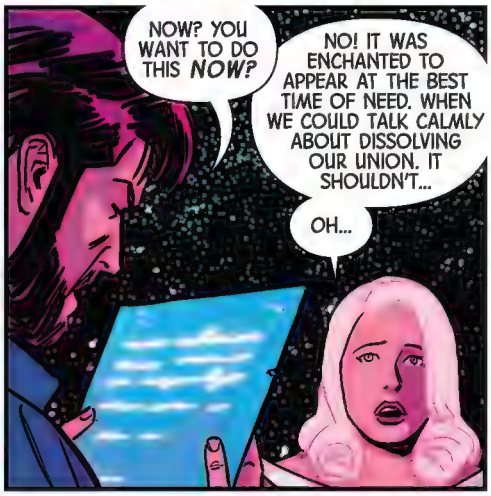

ARE YOU NORMALLY LIKE THIS?
LEOTARDS? NOT REALLY MY THING. BUT YOU MAKE IT WORK. I MEAN--
ALL RIGHT. SHUT UP.

OH, HELLO!
HOLD STILL. THIS WON'T HURT.



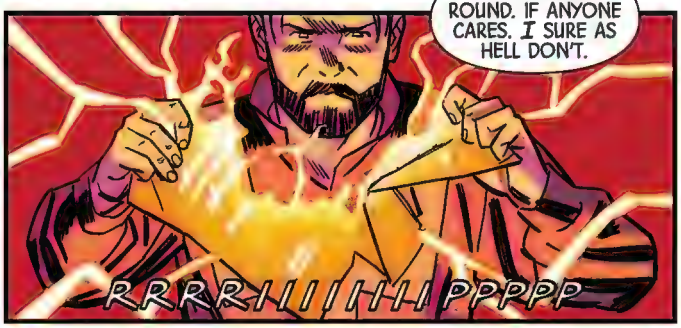

ZELMA, YOU'RE BACK! HAVE A GOOD TIME?
AN AMAZING TIME, BUT NOW I'M BACK IN THIS @#$% HOLE AND I'M MISERABLE! WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?!
I TRANSFERRED YOUR BLISS TO THE DEMON, BUT IT WON'T LAST.
WE NEED TO BREAK WHATEVER CONTRACT YOU SIGNED-- OR THE HOUSE, AND MAYBE ME WITH IT, IS GOING STRAIGHT TO ZANAX.

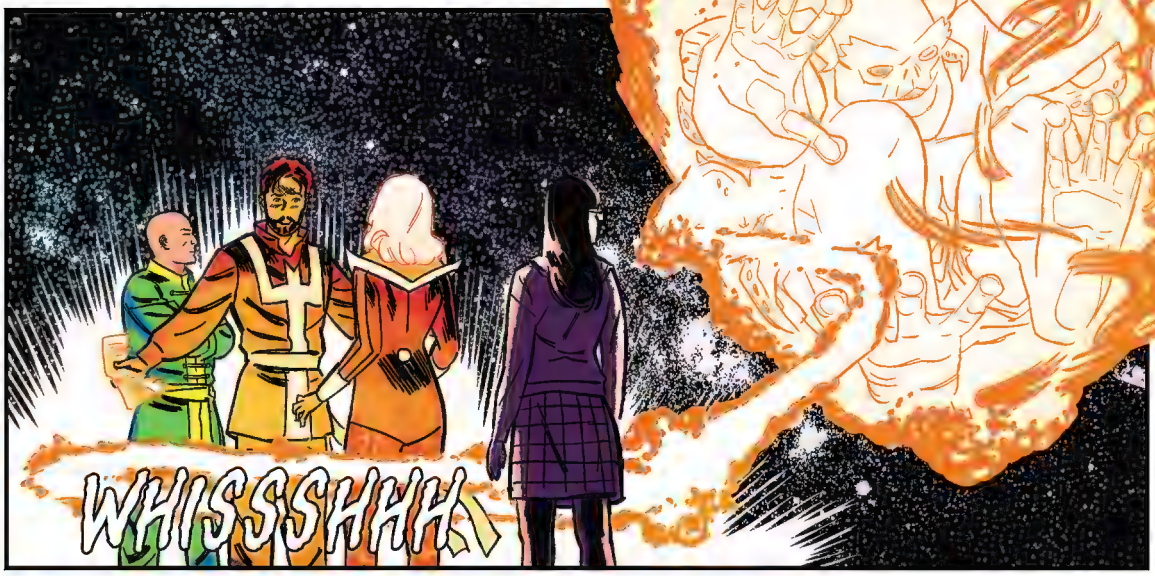
XYCORAX, AND WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
THAT SHOULDN'T BE HERE. NOT NOW.
IT WAS OUTSIDE.
LOOKS LIKE INTERNATIONAL OVERNIGHT. AT LEAST SOMEONE HAS MONEY TO RUN A DECENT OPERATION. HOW NICE FOR THEM! GOD! I'M SO PISSED OFF!


NOW? YOU WANT TO DO THIS NOW?
NO! IT WAS ENCHANTED TO APPEAR AT THE BEST TIME OF NEED. WHEN WE COULD TALK CALMLY ABOUT DISSOLVING OUR UNION. IT SHOULDN'T...
OH...

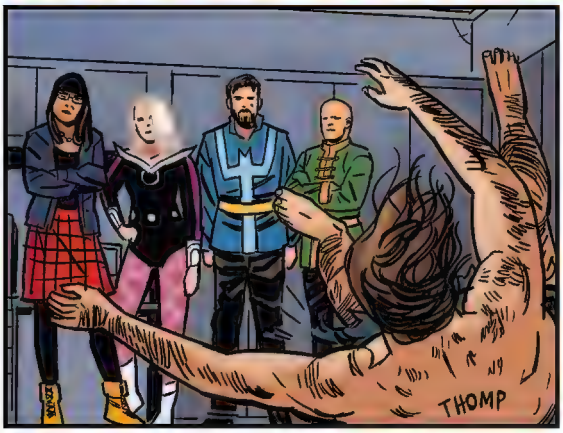
IT'S FOR WONG. YOU MUST REALLY LOVE HIM.
I PUT EVERYTHING I HAD INTO IT. IT WILL DISSOLVE ANY MAGICAL CONTRACT. IT'S HERE FOR YOU AND YOUR DEMON BUILDER.
THEN LET'S USE IT.

THAT IS AN INCREDIBLY POWERFUL OBJECT BEST PRESERVED. WE CAN TRY TO SEEK ANOTHER SOLUTION.
IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG TIME BEFORE EITHER OF US CAN SUMMON THE STRENGTH FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT AGAIN. DON'T WASTE IT.


HE'S COMING ROUND. IF ANYONE CARES. I SURE AS HELL DON'T.
RRRRIIIIIIIPPPPP


WHISSSHHH

SHOOOO


THOMP

WHUMK

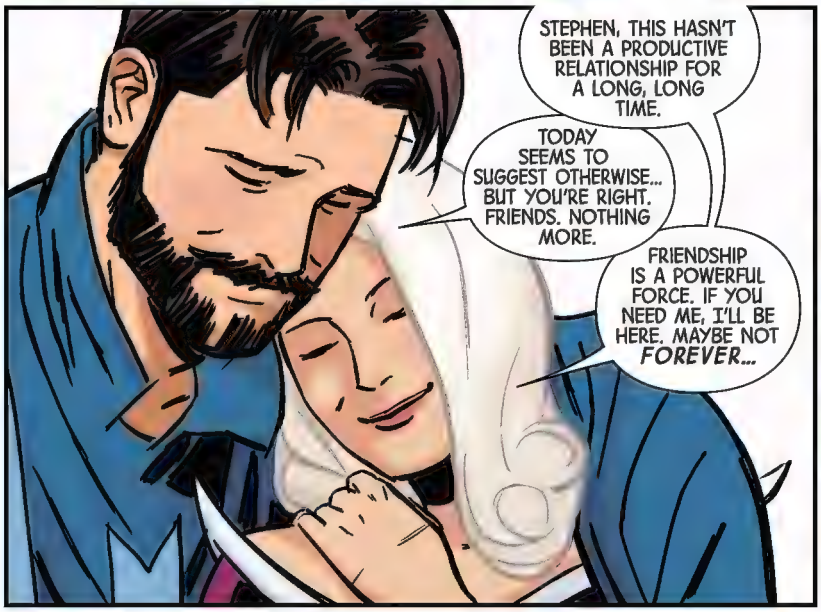
DO WE HAVE SOME WAY TO HOLD HIM WHILE WE SORT OUT HIS BANISHMENT?
I BELIEVE SO.
THEN CAN YOU AND ZELMA ESCORT HIM DOWNSTAIRS. PLEASE.
OF COURSE.

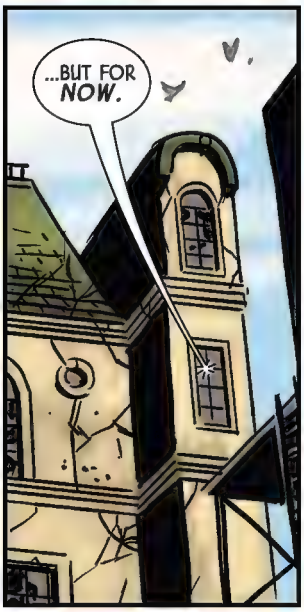
I HATE MY JOB.
YOU'LL FEEL BETTER SOON. YOU JUST NEED SOMETHING TO EAT.
I'D RATHER CHEW ON A RAT'S HIND LEG.

ETERNALLY BOUND.
BY MAGIC, BUT NOT BY LOVE, NOT ANYMORE.

IT WASN'T SUCH A TERRIBLE IDEA ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, THOUGH, WAS IT?
IT WAS *WONDERFUL, WHILE* IT WAS WONDERFUL, BUT YOU KNOW WE CAN'T CONTINUE LIKE THIS. WE'RE NOT MARRIED, WE'RE NOT TOGETHER, NOT REALLY.

I'M NOT READY TO PERMANENTLY UNDO WHAT WAS DONE ALL THOSE YEARS AGO. MAYBE ONE DAY...BUT NOT TODAY.


STEPHEN, THIS HASN'T BEEN A PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.
TODAY SEEMS TO SUGGEST OTHERWISE... BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. FRIENDS. NOTHING MORE.
FRIENDSHIP IS A POWERFUL FORCE. IF YOU NEED ME, I'LL BE HERE. MAYBE NOT *FOREVER...*


...BUT FOR *NOW.*

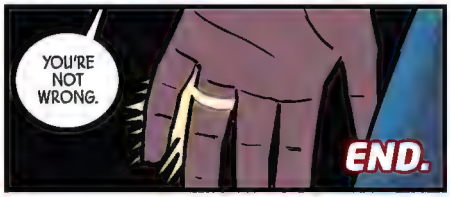
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
DOWNGRADED FROM PISSED TO MIFFED. I STILL THINK THERE WAS ANOTHER WAY.
I AGREE. BUT I DO THANK YOU FOR PRIORITIZING MY WELFARE.

HA!
PARDON ME?
THAT'S NOT WHAT HE DID. THE DOCTOR WAS TRYING TO PROVE SOMETHING TO THAT MAGIC CHICK. I CAN TELL.

WONG IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN ANY MAGICAL OBJECT.
YEAH, BUT CLEA'S KIND OF A MAGICAL OBJECT TOO, ISN'T SHE? AND NOW SHE TRUSTS YOU. PROBABLY THINKS YOU SEE HER AS A PERSON FIRST. GOOD JOB.

THINK WHAT YOU WANT. I'M GOING TO BED.
TELL ME I'M NOT WRONG, DOCTOR S! TELL ME I'M NOT WRONG!

NO.


YOU'RE NOT WRONG.
END.

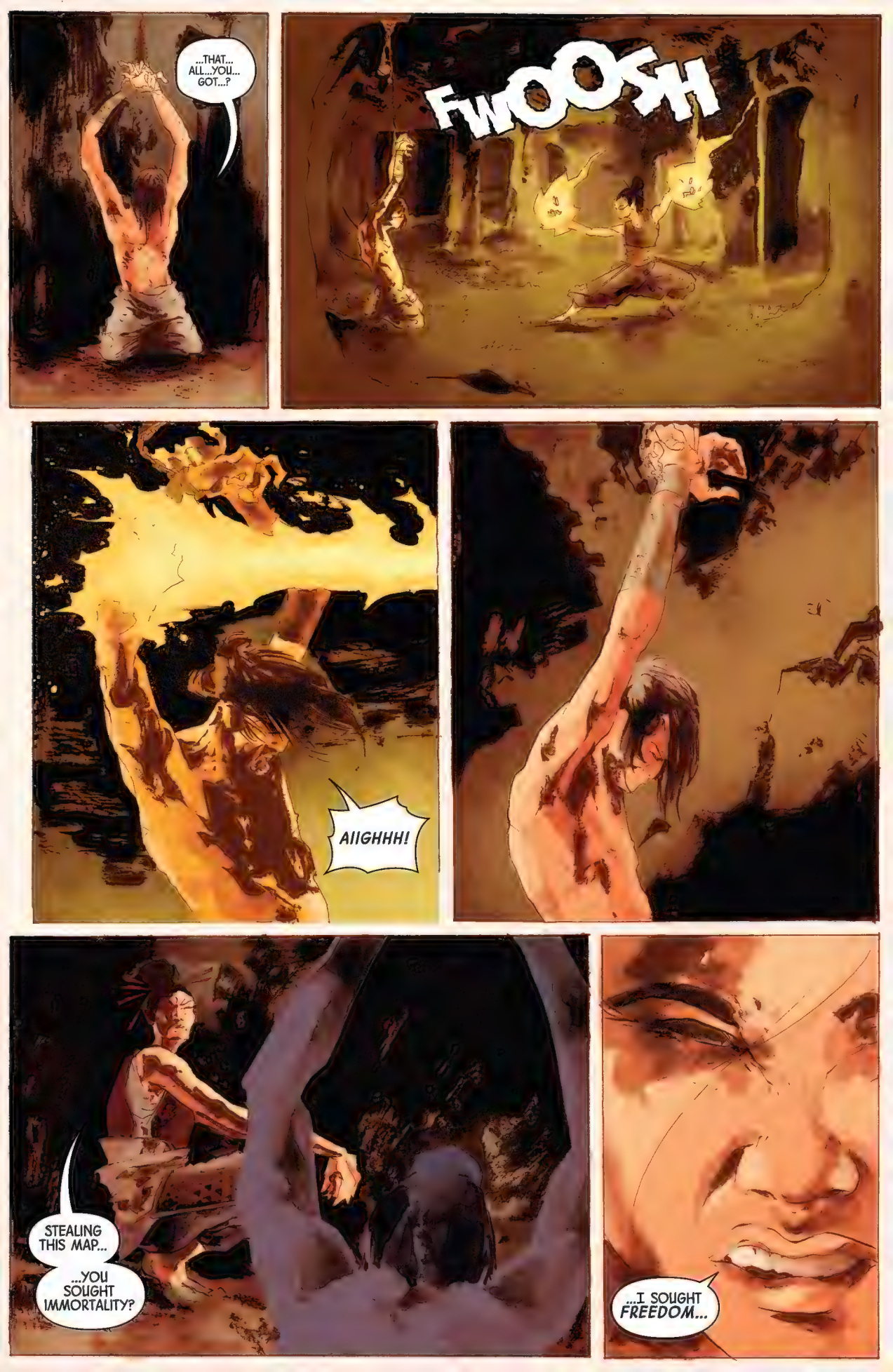
CENTURIES AGO...
I SHOULDN'T BE HERE.
I AM A FARMER.
AND THE HARVEST IS UPON MY HOMELAND.
BUT I SEEK TO HARVEST A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CROP FROM THESE HALLOWED WALLS.
I SEEK TO HARVEST MAGIC.

GARBAGE... USELESS...WASTE OF TIME...
I DIDN'T EVEN BELIEVE IN MAGIC UNTIL MONTHS AGO.
BUT THEN I MET KALUU.
HE OPENED MY EYES...
THERE YOU ARE.
...AND SHOWED ME THE PATH.
FWASH
NOW... TO FIND WHAT WAS LOST.
THIEF!

"THIEF"? WELL, IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.
BUT THIS IS A ROOM FULL OF *STOLEN* RELICS.
AND ALL DUE RESPECT, BUT YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU ARE DEALING WITH.
MY NAME IS YAO, AND I AM A CONJURER OF--
I TALK WHEN I AM AFRAID.
AND EVER SINCE I MET KALUU...
...I TALK ALL THE TIME.
AH. WELL. IT'S BEEN AMUSING, BUT...

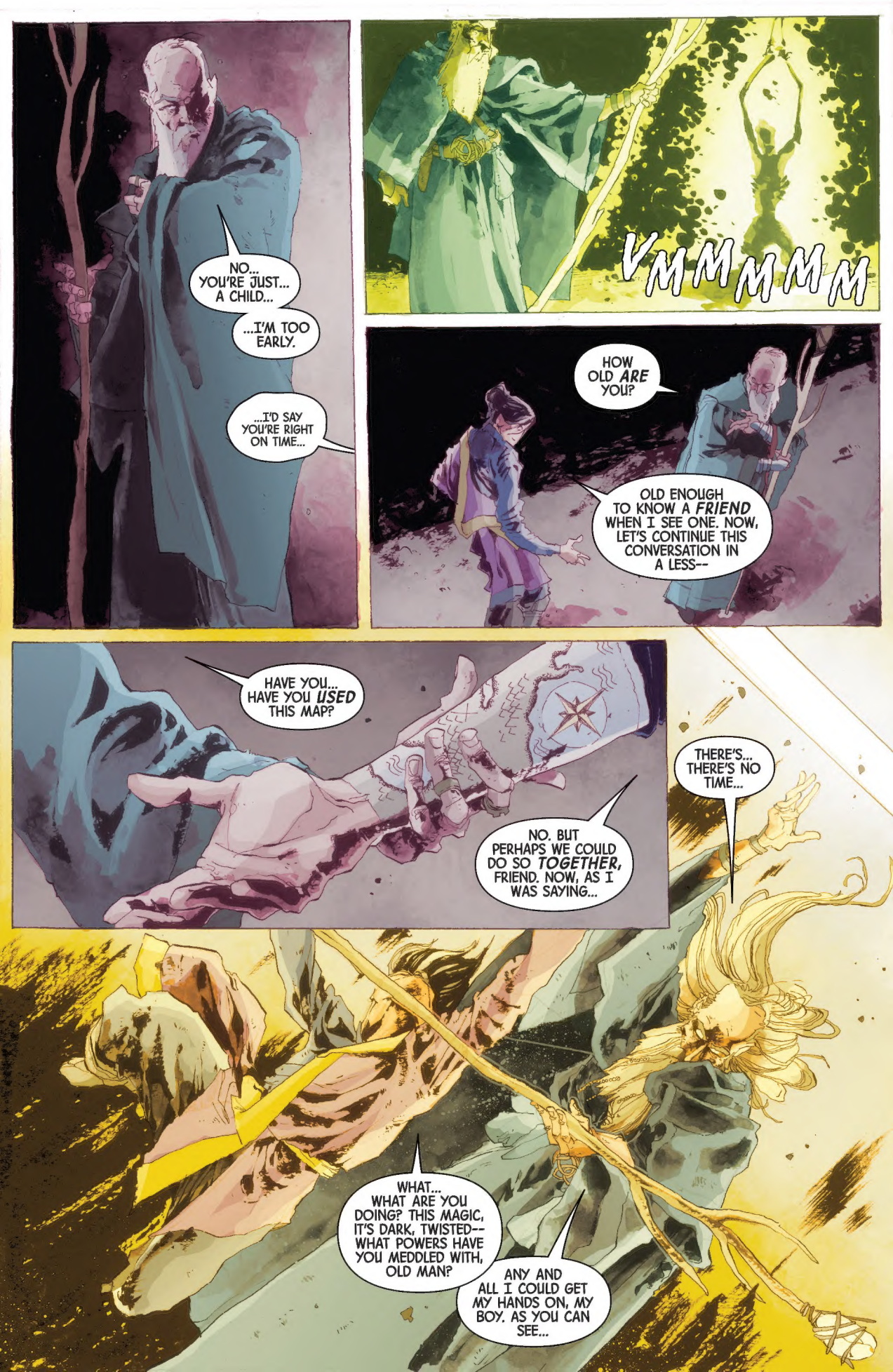
POOL OF WANDERING. PERFECT.
THIS POOL IS A PLACE WHERE DIRECTION IS MEANINGLESS.
AND THIS POOL IS FILLED WITH SOUL FISH. EVEN MORE PERFECT.
FORTUNATELY THESE FISH ARE QUITE FLAMMABLE.
THE KNIGHTS OF NEVER HAVE EXTRAORDINARY SECURITY.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR THEM...
...I, TOO, AM EXTRAORDINARY.

NOW. AS I WAS SAYING. TO FIND WHAT WAS--
AH. HELLO, THERE.
GLAD YOU ALL FOLLOWED ALONG. NOW I CAN SHOW YOU MY *TRUE* ABILITIES, AND YOU WILL BOW BEFORE--
WHAK
PATHETIC.
TENDERIZE THE MEAT.
THEN TAKE HIM TO THE DUNGEON.


...THAT... ALL...YOU... GOT...?
FWOOSH
AIIGHHH!
STEALING THIS MAP...
...YOU SOUGHT IMMORTALITY?
...I SOUGHT FREEDOM...

YOU HAVE GREAT STRENGTH. GREAT POWER.
BUT YOU ARE A CHILD WHO BELIEVES HE IS PLAYING WITH TOYS.
YOU WILL DIE AS YOU LIVED...
...MORTAL...
...AND ALONE.

KRAK


NO... YOU'RE JUST... A CHILD...
...I'M TOO EARLY.
...I'D SAY YOU'RE RIGHT ON TIME...
VMMMMM
HOW OLD ARE YOU?
OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW A FRIEND WHEN I SEE ONE. NOW, LET'S CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION IN A LESS--
HAVE YOU... HAVE YOU USED THIS MAP?
NO. BUT PERHAPS WE COULD DO SO TOGETHER, FRIEND. NOW, AS I WAS SAYING...
THERE'S... THERE'S NO TIME...
WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THIS MAGIC, IT'S DARK, TWISTED-- WHAT POWERS HAVE YOU MEDDLED WITH, OLD MAN?
ANY AND ALL I COULD GET MY HANDS ON, MY BOY. AS YOU CAN SEE...

...THERE IS MUCH WORK TO BE DONE.
MY NAME IS MERLIN. AND I NEED YOUR HELP.
TO BE CONTINUED IN DOCTOR STRANGE AND THE SORCERERS SUPREME #1.
STRANGE TALES: YAO, THE NOT-QUITE-ANCIENT ONE
WRITER: ROBBIE THOMPSON ARTIST: JONATHAN MARKS BARRAVECCHIA COLORS: LEE LOUGHRIDGE
LETTERING: VC'S CORY PETIT ASSOCIATE EDITOR: DARREN SHAN EDITOR: NICK LOWE
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YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS *NEXT?*

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